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ABSTRACT

The problems existing during the reorganization of the Cleveland School District into a unitary administration are presented from the perspective of the head of the Research and Analysis Department. The district had been fighting a desegregation case for 9 years and operating in a receivership with a triple bureaucracy imposed upon it (the normal school dictrict bureaucracy, court-mandated reporting procedures, and state-imposed procedures). As a result many problems still exist. Testing is a major problem, because the triple requirements have resulted in overtesting. The district also faces problems evaluating programs. To better understand these and other problems, the district is developing better relationships between schools and the central administration and is working in a manner similar to regional exchanges (problem clarification to resource identification, to resource linkage). The Research and Analysis Department is developing policies based on court documents and investigating and analyzing the impact of policies after implementation. The district recognizes that it has been oriented toward reacting to immediate prescribed tasks due to these problems. It is now working to orient itself to the end of the desegregation case by combining the Final Standards with prescribed actions, with permanency, and with evidence that the district is functioning beyond the prescribed requirements. (MD)

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WHAT DO YOU MEAN OBJECTIVE AND COLLABORATIVE?

OR, HOW ONE DISTRICT TRIES TO KEEP ITS NOSE CLEAN AND ITS HANDS DIRTY AT THE SAME TIME

by

Peirce Hammond

Cleveland Public Schools

EA 015 031

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In August, 1982, Cleveland's hard-fought desegregation case was nine years old. The district was in receivership. The Federal District Court had come down hard on the district due to the recalcitrant behavior of the board and members of the administration. Some improvements were at hand, however. First, a two year period of dual administration, "Deseg" at one end of the third floor, the "Regular" Superintendent at the other, was ending. Second, a new superintendent, Cleveland's first black superintendent, Frederick Holliday, was to take office in three months.

The reorganization which was necessary to move the district to a unitary administration included six cabinet-level departments under the superintendent and deputy superintendent, three reporting to each. One of these was the Department of Research and Analysis, reporting directly to the superintendent. In June, 1983, I assumed the position of "Chief" of that department.

The department was a recombination of Deseg and Regular functions. Its personnel had served on each side of the house. It included four divisions each headed by a director: Testing and Evaluation was the largest unit. It was, and is, directed by a strong, experienced evaluation and testing professional. It was the heart of the office in many ways. Its leader was the most respected of the old staff still in Research. Further, its functions, along with proposal writing, were the classic Research functions and served to provide some stability in what had been a period of seemingly constant change lasting for several years. During those years, the fortunes of Research and of several of its key figures had gone up and down and up and down again, until no one was really certain what had improved, what worsened, who was in charge and for how long, or what the rules were.

The changes included the addition of three other divisions. Research Dissemination and Proposal Development also performed functions which members of the research staff were familiar and comfortable with. Dissemination was largely a matter of doing ERIC and other literature "searches". Proposal development consisted of technical assistance, including technical writing, for proposals which either were relatively standard (e.g., Title I, now Chapter One, and its state counterpart) or which originated elsewhere.

Policy, Planning and Analysis was a new division. The major clue to its function came from its name. No one was certain if the focus of the division should be to consider planning and analysis in relation to policy development only; to consider the three tasks, policy development, planning, and analysis separate although possibly related items; or to concentrate on one or two of the assigned functions (e.g., policy, or planning, or analysis). The situation was not helped because there was a lack of direction from the Acting Superintendent who established the divisions (who became Deputy in November, 1982, then left the district in June, 1983), the hiring of a high-powered outside consultant firm to write policies, and the appointment of a division director who had little experience in the area who simultaneously was made Acting Chief of the Department. (For that matter, none of the division staff had much policy development or long-ranged planning expertise--although good analytic skills were present.) Policy development was, however, the main task the division had focused on by my arrival two years ago.

The fourth division, also new, was Desegregation Monitoring and Special Studies. Here, too, there were no explicit guidelines. The division

borrowed its approach from evaluation through observation coupled with some data analysis and from the work of the Court-mandated Office on School Monitoring and Community Relations. The latter has served as the Court's eyes and ears and, in some respects, its surrogate* since its inception in 1978.

The department was sound in its staffing thanks largely to the efforts of Margaret Fleming who had been the leader of its predecessor organizations. Dr. Fleming had, in 1978, been made Deputy Superintendent. In 1983, she, along with the other ranking administrators at the cabinet levels from both ends of the hall, was made a Special Assistant to the Superintendent**.

We were operating in what amounted to be a triple bureaucracy in 1983. In addition to the normal urban school district bureaucracy was imposed that of Court-mandated reports, studies, and mandates and this was topped off by State-imposed procedures due to the system's indebtedness to the State. Both "extra" bureaucracies placed some helpful strictures, priorities, necessities, and goals on the district. But both were resented and resisted.

Resentment, more than resistance, was a prevailing mood in Research and Analysis in 1983. This had four principal causes. First, many in the department had been in more than one job in more than one division of the district during the previous five years. Second, many had devoted much effort to attempting to help the district through this difficult period and had seen

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*While being explicit that it does not speak for the Court, O.S.M.C.R. does have Court-given authority to comment on a wide range of district-produced evidence, including various required periodic reports, as well as to carry out special studies of its own.

**Both administrative heads prior to the re-unified administration, the Superintendent and the Administrator for Desegregation, left the employ of the Cleveland City School District in 1982.

some significant part of their effort go for naught or be trampled underfoot, resulting in cynicism, burn-out, or resignation. Third, Margaret Fleming, respected by all, admired by many, had taken a bad beating after having been elevated to Deputy Superintendent--many saw her as a scapegoat whose professional standards were such that she was loyal to a fault. Fourth, whereas some two years earlier the administrative staff in the department were all told to get certificates in order, just months before my arrival the Acting Superintendent had "demoted" the department to a classified (non-certificated) entity, complete with lower salary levels and the stigma of association not with Curriculum and Instruction but with the Business Department, trades workers, and secretaries.

Whatever may have been expected of me when I arrived, I was well-treated. Margaret Fleming has been, as always, the consumate professional. My predecessor was completely helpful. He left the district some three months after my arrival, but was entirely cooperative until then. I felt little resentment from the staff and some welcome. Most were quite willing to give me a chance.

The problems confronting us then are mostly still there.

In Testing there were two major problems with a third on the horizon. First, we were overtesting. We still are, but we have reached, in principal, an understanding with the Department of Curriculum and Instruction regarding cutting back. We test as follows: CTBS Reading in grades 1-12; Cleveland Reading Competency Test in grades 1-9; CTBS Language in grades 3-6, 8, and 11; CTBS Math in grades 3-8; CTBS Science in grades 5 and 8; Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test in grades 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, and 9; Iowa Test of Basic Skills Social Studies in grades 5, 6, 7, and 9; Ohio Vocational Achievement

Test in vocational schools, grades 10-12; Cognitive Abilities Test in grades 2, 3, 6, and 8; and the Ohio Interest Survey in grades 8 and 10. This year we made a break-through in making the Differential Aptitudes Test optional in grade 8. With it included, an eighth grader was subjected to ten different tests, extending over 855 minutes, i.e., over fourteen hours of instruction lost. Aside from eighth grade, the lowest amount of time spent testing was 205 minutes on two tests in grade 1; the highest was 580 minutes for five tests in grade 11 or 555 minutes for seven tests in grade 5. Every grade but first had at least 390 minutes of testing.

In addition, the State has mandated a rather modest form of Competency-Based Education in Reading, Mathematics, and English Composition phased-in through the 1989-90 school year. This brings us to the second major problem. The Acting Superintendent brought in an outside consultant to develop a reading competency test for the district. The "Deseg" side of the house had seen competency testing as a means of focussing attention very clearly on reading instruction. This it had done with much fanfare. Indeed, the district was committed well beyond the state competency testing mandate which required testing at least once in grades 1-4, at least once in 5-8, and at least once in 9-12 and which imposed no sanctions. The district was committed to annual testing in all grades 1-9. In addition, failure to pass the test meant failure to pass the grade except in grade nine. In order to receive a diploma, one had to pass the ninth grade test. This commitment was loud and public. Changes might be seen as expecting less and, therefore, discriminatory.

A pilot test and then a field test of the competency test pool of items had been conducted in Spring, 1983. Logistical problems, particularly regarding the former, had created an uproar. The objectives upon which the

test had been based had been introduced part way through the 1982-83 school year with little staff development and confusing directions. Results were announced based on an assumption that Cleveland had very high standards both with respect to the objectives which had been set and as regards passing cores. In order to pass, it was judged, one had to receive credit for mastering at least three quarters of the objectives. One received credit for mastering an objective if one correctly answered at least three out of the four items testing that objective correctly.

Another uproar. In grades one and two, some forty to fifty percent of the students would have passed under these rules. But in grade three, only about sixteen percent and the results were worse for the upper grades, with less than one percent showing this level of mastery in ninth grade.

The new Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction and I recognized that we had inherited a mess. Politically, the Board and Superintendent were committed to higher standards through a tough competency test. But 99% failure?! We called in two panels of experts, Reading experts* to examine reading procedures and objectives and measurement experts** to advise on testing and measurement procedures. As a result, Curriculum and Instruction committed to a re-examination of the reading objectives and we followed with the commitment to redo the test to follow the revised objectives and to develop an empirically-based cut-score. We also managed to get the district to back off of failing students at every grade level based solely on the test. It was to be one factor in the teacher's decisions. The diploma

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*Jeanne Chall, Carl Smith, and Dorothy Strickland

**Ronald Hambleton, Paul LeMahieu, and Jason Millman

sanction remained, but not to be effective until 1992 when the first seniors to have attended only desegregated schools in Cleveland were to graduate.

We still face many problems in this area. Cut scores, summer school testing, development of tests in mathematics and composition, and the relationship between the competency test and the standardized norm-referenced reading test used by the district are some of them. They are compounded by changing political circumstances; a new, possibly interim, superintendent with different, more skeptical, views of competency testing than his predecessor; and more vocal questioning in the form of a written report by the Office of School Monitoring and Community Relations.

The testing problem on the horizon stems from a Court Order which requires that we safeguard to be certain not only that "All tests, whether standardized, criterion-referenced, or teacher-made, be developed, administered, and scored in a nondiscriminatory manner" but that, in addition, "the results of such tests be used in a non-discriminatory manner*" [emphasis added]. How to assure the Court that this is so is a problem.

Our evaluation shop faces the problem of too much to do. We have moved beyond the project evaluations of Chapter I on which most of us cut our teeth. We must still do such evaluations. But we have larger issues to face. We must now evaluate whole programs irrespective of funding: the district's Affirmative Reading Program; its Technical-Vocational Education Program; its Magnet Schools Program; and others. In addition, our current board and superintendent constantly ask evaluative questions. They want studies of everything based upon "Indicators of Effectiveness" for everything. We are

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*Final Standards for Implementation of the Remedial Orders, United States District Court, April 24, 1981.

exploring several approaches. First, much of what is desired is policy-based and so our Policy, Planning and Analysis staff is also involved. Second, each department, division, and school must develop an Operational Plan each year which is to include measurable objectives. These could form the basis for answering many of the questions. Third, these same objectives could be translated into simple, easily collected, easily understood Indicators of Effectiveness on which Department or Division heads as well as Research and Analysis staff members could report.

The main issue in dissemination has been to get our hands more dirty in ways which contribute more fully to better-operating schools. ERIC searches are fine, but we are now attempting to develop working relationships with schools which will allow us to better understand their problems and ways which we can assist in solving or managing them and better help them to know what we and research in general can do to be of service to them. This attitude was one I developed at NIE. One of the surprises awaiting me in the "real world" of an urban district was that this attitude did not exist and was resisted out there.

Despite such inertia, I have been determined to press on into this area, seeing it as the key to our future operation as a contributor to improved education in Cleveland. In searching for models, we have been inspired by the work of the R & D Interpretation Service supported by NIE and currently operated by the Appalachia Educational Laboratory under David Holdzkom. This model has helped us to think about our role as research digesters, interpreters, synthesizers, and packagers as well as that of advocates for this use of knowledge.

RDIS was also instructive to us in our need to be sensitive to the desires, needs, and capabilities of those who we wish to serve. This attitude was also present in work done in Fairfax County, Virginia under Todd Endo.

Todd shared information about these efforts with us and encouraged us to get out into school sites. This effort began this fall, using a questionnaire asking:

- If you could work on one problem area that exists within your school, what would that problem area be?
- What factors do you think contribute to/cause this problem?
- What resources do you think you would need to help solve this problem?
- How would you see someone from the Research Department helping you solve this problem?

The visits proved to be profitable. Direct communication between researcher and site administrator had seldom taken place in the past. The researchers were able to convey knowledge about the general functions performed by the Research Department as well as about specific services that could be utilized by school site personnel. The school site administrator found a resource within the school district that was interested in understanding the problems that impeded efforts to improve the learning process within their school.

After the visits were completed, the Research Dissemination staff reviewed all interview data. As expected, a multitude of problems surfaced as a result of these interviews. Surprisingly, the most frequently mentioned concern pertained to student behavior in the elementary school lunchroom. During the two hours devoted to lunch (approximately one-third of a typical school day), the inappropriate behavior exhibited by students encouraged disruption within the classroom. This focus has provided us with a small beginning, but a practical, workable concern has been identified.

We are now working in a manner similar to that often used by Regional Exchangees: problem clarification to resource identification (usually within the system) to resource "linkage", technical assistance, training, interpretation, further study and so on.

Our efforts in policy work have now received much needed orientation. The Board, with some prompting from us and from O.S.M.C.R., has become concerned with policy as (1) a vehicle for demonstrating to the Court its commitment to institutionalizing desegregation practices and (2) a means of expressing its will to the administration and providing a means for holding the administration accountable to its expressed views. These changes have served to focus the division of Policy, Planning and Analysis on assisting in deriving needed policies based on Court documents supplemented by data, knowledge, and experience and on investigating and analyzing the impact of policies on behavior. The latter comes through quarterly review sessions with those most impacted by policies from central office, school sites (principals), and the community. Planning remains something of an abstraction, but its day will come as these other functions mature.

Desegregation Monitoring and Special Studies has also undergone changes and also contemplates the possibility of more in the future. Its orientation was changed, shortly after my arrival, from field monitoring combined with a rather diffuse pattern of examination of policies and of progress towards accomplishment of required actions. The required actions were from a diverse body of reports and comments from O.S.M.C.R. Under my direction, these were gathered into one Monthly Progress Report. The Desegregation Monitoring unit then focussed its attention on the district's progress in finishing these. This unit has also served to coordinate much of the activity in moving other departments into compliance.

Over time it became clear that the district needed to accomplish more than this set of "fixed pieces". We needed to institutionalize our changed behavior to provide the Court and the community some basis for confidence in restoring to us the public trust. We, further, needed to take

some initiative to show good faith in both corrective and proactive ways. That is, we needed to show that we could and would discover and fix our own errors and that we could and would be proactive and affirmative in forwarding the cause of desegregation on our own initiative.

That we were too oriented to the immediate, prescribed tasks was clear for all to see, but made much easier to see and to take initiative to correct due to the fact that the Chief of Research and Analysis sits on the Superintendent's Cabinet. This has allowed me to begin a process to orient the district toward the end of the Desegregation case by combining the Final Standards, to which the judge will hold us and on which we will have to present our evidence that we are indeed in compliance, with both accomplished and to-be-accomplished required (prescribed) actions, with evidence of permanency or institutionalization (policies and their implementation), and with evidence of our going beyond the prescribed.

But here is where hands dirty (helping analyze and solve problems) and nose clean must be in balance. I cannot lose my perspective as an objective, if caring and motivated, observer. My division of Desegregation Monitoring must be valued, respected, believed, and above reproach. I also cannot do other people's work for them, nor allow Research people to be co-opted to do it. Yet I and we must be constructive. We must avoid being seen as imposing requirements in order that ownership and true institutionalization, true belief, true change may occur.

This issue, credibility on the one hand, constructive contribution on the other, is a constant and persistent issue. The current superintendent wants us to "cross the line". He values our intelligence and our judgment and says he wants us to serve as his staff. We report to him. But our intellectual lineage is made of more conservative stuff. We believe that the odds need to be at least 19:1 against error before we commit. We want

replication even if those odds are quoted to us. Are we ready for the world of politics and handball. Are we ready for the next administration to ask us where we got off making all these pronouncements. As we ready to abandon the ivory tower of untouchability and unreality in quest of the real, "real world"?